



F-35 Lightning II Program

Public Affairs Release – 2014 11 16

CNO VISITS FUTURE HOME OF F-35 AND SURPRISES OFFICERS WITH MEDALS

By Melinda Larson, NAS Lemoore, Public Affairs

NAVAL AIR STATION LEMOORE (NNS) -- Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), Adm. Jonathan W. Greenert, and his wife, Darleen, toured the U.S. Navy's future home base for the F-35C Lightning II aircraft to see first-hand where the Pacific Fleet's strike fighter force will continue to thrive as a premier Naval aviation asset.

On Oct. 2, the U.S. Navy announced Naval Air Station (NAS) Lemoore as the west coast home base for 100 F-35C Lightning II strike fighter aircraft that will replace 70 aging FA-18 Hornet aircraft by 2028.

"This is one of the sites where the Joint Strike Fighter will be home based, and it's coming here first. The Sailors at Naval Air Station Lemoore will be the ones to most effectively integrate this aircraft into the air wing. We will get this right," Greenert said, as he addressed more than 1,000 Sailors and Marines from NAS Lemoore and its tenant commands during an all-hands call.

The CNO opened the assembly by administering the oath of enlistment to 25 Sailors from several commands, including the installation, Strike Fighter Wing Pacific Fleet (SFWP) squadrons and Naval Hospital Lemoore. He also presented four Navy Achievement Medals. Speaking with each member individually, the CNO's wife and the rest of the crowd were kept entertained by the parade of Navy family members invited to the stage for photographs. Admiral Greenert answered several questions and discussed a variety of topics during the all hands call, from uniform changes to manning issues, deployment lengths and what motivated him to serve as the 30th CNO. "First of all, you have to get there and be in the Navy this long," quipped the 1975 U.S. Naval Academy graduate. "My number one motivation has been my wife, Darleen. You have to be happy in your home life. Secondly, you've got to want to serve with shipmates like you guys. You have a strong ethical background and good moral character, that's important to me," Greenert added.

The CNO's message, and his presence at the air station, seemed to resonate with Sailors. "He talked to everyone like they're family. The CNO being here shows his support for us, we're not off on our own, we're part of something larger than ourselves," noted Equipment Operator 3rd Class (SCW) Andrew Johnson, assigned to Naval Operational Support Center Lemoore.

The CNO also met with installation and SFWP leadership for a round-table of discussions that included the CNO's positive view of the future of Naval aviation and where it needs to go with not only the F-35C, but also with the current FA-18 Super Hornet. Naval aviation will struggle if both platforms are not maintained and adapt into the future. Additionally, installation and SFWP leadership were able to pass along their concerns regarding installation support and operational requirements for the Fleet, Fighter, and Family.

En route to the installation's airfield, the CNO stopped to visit the new NAS Lemoore Aviator Memorial where he surprisingly presented Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medals to the two Naval aviators responsible for the Memorial's creation. The duo lost two friends and brethren Naval Aviators following a fatal mishap April 6, 2011. "This is a selfless, innovative way to pay tribute to shipmates. Presenting Lt. Cmdr. Erik Kenny and Lt.



141105-O-ZZ999-037 PACIFIC OCEAN (Nov. 6, 2014) An F-35C Lightning II carrier variant joint strike fighter makes an arrested landing aboard the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68). The F-35 Lightning II Pax River Integrated Test Force from Air Test and Evaluation Squadron (VX) 23 is currently conducting initial at-sea trials aboard Nimitz. (U.S. Navy photo courtesy of Lockheed Martin by Andy Wolfe/Released)



141104-N-IP743-213 PACIFIC OCEAN (Nov. 4, 2014) An F-35C Lightning II carrier variant joint strike fighter is prepared for launch aboard the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68). The F-35 Lightning II is undergoing initial at-sea trials aboard Nimitz. (U.S. Navy video by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Brett Cote/Released)



141103-O-ZZ999-004 PACIFIC OCEAN (Nov. 3, 2014) An F-35C Lightning II carrier variant joint strike fighter conducts an approach for an arrested landing. Two joint strike fighters are conducting a series of test aboard Nimitz. (U.S. Navy photo courtesy of Lockheed Martin by Andy Wolfe/Released)

Cmdr. Ben Charles with the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal is the least we can do for these guys who took it upon themselves to make it happen," the CNO said.

During a tour of the air station's Operations side, the CNO saw where strike fighter air crews perform about 200,000 flight operations per year. "He completely grasped where we are, how we are growing, and the significance we play not only in our carrier strike groups with what will be nearly 60% of U.S. Navy's strike fighter airpower, but in our U.S. Navy and National Defense," said Capt. Monty Ashliman, Commanding Officer NAS Lemoore.

The relocation of two strike fighter squadrons from NAS Oceana to NAS Lemoore in 2016 indicates the west coast air station will soon be home to 60% of the Navy's strike fighter aircraft.

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